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man promises to do this and his companions by way of reward do him even greater honor at his funeral, thus augmenting the departed one's power for good in the spirit world. Do we not do likewise when we implore those who die in the odor of sanctity to intercede in heaven for us in our pilgrimage through this vale of tears?

Sorrow points up the basic similarity in all men, and the harmony of the human character in actions and speech, hopes and doubts, is never manifested more clearly than when confronted with a grave.

Chapter XI

Doctors

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In the Chaco there are both male and female doctors, but very few medicines; treatment being purely empirical because of the ignorance and superstition of those Indians. [209]

It is strange that the wild inhabitants of the Chaco have not discovered remedies, but that is the way it is, in part because of their lack of intelligence but mostly because of the superstition which grips them in all matters respecting disease and sickness.

They firmly believe that sickness is caused by an a'hot's getting into a person, and therefore all efforts are bent in the direction of getting rid of it by the only means possible, that is by conjuring it out.

It follows logically from this that their doctors cannot be other than witch doctors or priests or what have you. Apart from this their very superstition is a consequence of each person's need to free himself of a present evil and his ignorance as to how to bring this about. That generous measure of wit native to man does service as a middle road between ignorance and superstition.

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Nevertheless they realize their lack of efficacious remedies and also the superiority of the whites in this matter, in whom they have great faith as healers; while the poorer and more

Chaco Indians SI4

ignorant whites, in their turn, have a great deal of faith in the Indian witch doctors. C M 755 648

I know for a fact that rich ranchers have called Indians to come and treat them.

The witch doctors attempt to cure their patients by exorcising the a'hots by shouting, leaping, and blowing and spitting into the sick person's mouth. They prescribe, along with this exorcising activity, certain homeopathic remedies such as dieting, bathing and I believe massaging also. M 755

The faith which they place in their incantations does not wane even in the presence of white man's medicine.

It happened once while we were on board the river boat that the boat stuck fast in the mud. A number of Indians surrounded us and a group of them brought forward a sick Indian for us to cure. We did not have our interpreter with us on that occasion, but I was able to put my notes to some use and finally understood that the invalid had been bitten by a snake: -- "Chiasquietáj-Kíá" -- "snake-bite remedy" was what they were saying. M 123 755

We had a small medicine chest and hurriedly applied ammonia to the bite. It was extremely important for us that the outcome of our ministrations be a positive one for we needed to gain prestige and also friends among the Indians, for relations were strained and some days previously we had been ambushed by a group of them who had then fired on us at point blank range.

Our patient, however, improved very slowly and there were times during the first three days -- a superstitiously critical period -- in which we had serious doubts of his recovering, because the swelling kept growing upwards towards the groin and belly and, if it had reached the area close to the heart all would have been over for him

During this whole period of treatment -- which was carried on in a pretty rigorous fashion, [210] the situation hardly calling for ladies with kid gloves -- the patient took only water, as the witch doctors prescribed, and then, during the night while the crew slept, the doctors would begin to chant húu húu húu... héé héé héé... hii hii hii... and then once more húu húu húu, etc. Every now and again they would spit and blow like so many bellows upon the wound and other parts of the body, keeping this up for hours on end.

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I, who used to stay up very late, both to do my stint at guard duty and to take advantage of a few uninterrupted hours for study, used to take up a stand close to them. At first my presence there made them keep quiet, but later on, taking heart at my reiterated hiss tzilataj ("very pretty"), and seeing that I did not make fun of them, they continued in spite of my being there.

At last, after twenty days, the sick man got well.

One of the very strange treatments is the one which they ad- 752
minister to those who have been poisoned by a sting ray, which fish can administer an extremely painful and sometimes mortal wound. This treatment consists in placing the offended part, which is usually the ankle, over the smoke given off from the cracks in burning palo santo [lignum vital --Translator], which is a resinous wood, after which a woman in her menstruating period is to sit astride it. I have been assured by whites who have made the experiment that it is a very efficacious remedy.

Every treatment for sickness or wounds however needs, if it 756
is to have any virtue, to be in the hands of a witch doctor (male), or at least in those of a female witch doctor.

Not everyone can be a witch doctor, and just as the members of this profession make their patients pay according to the seriousness of the malady and the means of the individual, either in skins, animals, food or other things, so also does this profession have its seamy side in which quarrels and deception occur. In addition to this and in order to get greater prestige they shroud themselves in mystery and the supernatural. So it is that in the village of Granadero the Indians, speaking about a young man who was already embarked on this career, said that as a boy he had vanished and then reappeared after two years which he had spent underground among the a'hot, these a'hot having carried him off in order to instruct him in the art and imbue him with the virtues of doctor and priest.

While on the subject of these frauds I must tell of an occasion when things almost took a bad turn for me. I went to call on 123
Chief Granadero who was just recovering from a long illness. I 755
had with me, as is my custom, a pocket inkwell and a pen. Granadero noticed these things and asked me what they were. I, thinking to please him flourished the inkwell and pen and set about writing, but saw in a moment that Granadero had become furious and menacing -- his doctors had just cured him of the a'hot which

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had been tormenting him for so long, and had extracted from his body several pens and a pencil, under guise of which, they said, the a'hot had been harming him.

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[211] The women seem to be extraordinarily able as mid-wives.

With singular ability they wait for the critical moment of labor and then, raising and holding the mother-to-be they shake her and keep uttering their customary exorcisms until they are successful in their endeavors.

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However, if one wishes to be in on an interesting spectacle one must see an invalid getting the full treatment in a village.

One evening while I was camped near a tribe I became curious on hearing a great sound of voices and the repercussion of strong blows on the ground. As my relations with these Indians was of the very best I did not hesitate to go to see what was afoot. In the midst of the village, in a sort of central square, I saw a circle of black figures illuminated fitfully by the blaze of the fires; they were the squaws and men who were sitting on their heels smoking in silence. In the center of the circle, in a space of about eight meters, four robust men with ostrich feathers and timbrels at their ankles, wrists, waists and on their heads were running back and forth, with their hands raised, gesticulating wildly and rattling some gourds half filled with seeds which added to the noise. They ran about singing and howling, and one could see that they were panting and covered with sweat. They would straighten out their legs and pound the ground with the whole sole of their feet, and as they did this they would raise their voices in a mad, desperate way, with their arms on high, heads to one side and body curved over.

Alternately two of them would stop, crouch, move their heads rapidly from right to left and up and down, howl and blow and spit on the backs, legs, heads and mouths of two invalids who were seated in their midst.

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The two sick men were suffering terribly from the a'hots which had entered their bodies in the form of rheumatic pains, and the witch doctors were attempting to drive them out with their infernal dance. This, it was understood, they would be unable to do until they managed, by means of their unbridled racing about and thumping, to tire and intimidate the a'hots who, with evil intent

and at the very same time were dancing precisely the same dance underground immediately beneath them. The object of making so much noise was to intercept all communication with the sickness a'hots who were in the two men. The best doctor is the one who most jumps, howls and beats the earth with his feet. 755

The public who surrounded these goings on was there to give importance and greater virtue to the treatment, but the suspicion was in the air that the a'hot, on leaving the body of the possessed might take it into its mind to enter one of the other persons present.

This scene convinces me that: among the Indians, doctors earn their bread by the sweat of their... whole bodies; that among them also deceivers, by dint of much deceiving, finally [212] deceive themselves; and that the rabble was really convinced of the efficacy of the exorcisms.

And I was about to smile, moved by scorn and pity, but I remembered that c'etait tout comme chez nous [it was all much the same as it is with us--Translator] and... the smile died before it was born.

Chapter XII

Social Matters

These Indians do not differentiate the seasons of the year as we do, but rather by the several harvests: thus they speak of the season of algarrobo pod harvest, etc. 805

How could they even begin to divide the year into months or moons if they only count up to four? This very fact guarantees us a priori that they have not busied themselves with establishing the laws of the earth's or sun's movements. [802]

In spite of this it is remarkable that they divide the day up into innumerable portions according to the position of the sun, which takes the place of our hours. They also differentiate between various constellations such as the Pleiades, Venus, the Milky Way, and Centaur. [821]

And yet they do not have a word meaning "year." The Matacos use one, c-lúppe, which means period, and which has the same indeterminate meaning which that word has with us. Instead of "day," they say "sun" (i-qûa-la), and in place of "month,"

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

776 The second class of spirits are called *nahút*. They are the most feared
761 because they are believed to cause death, the phenomenon most feared by primitive man. Being particularly death demons, the *nahút* are frequently called *nahút yil*. *Yil* is the Mataco word for death. Every death is due to a special *nahút yil*, and of course every mortal disease, or every disease which naturally ends in death unless the art of the medicine-man can prevent it. If one asks a Mataco Indian what a *nahút* is like, he will answer that it is a thin, shadow-like human figure; it is the double of the dead man. The *nahút* live in the earth, where the dead are interred, but they frequently leave this dwelling-place and fly through the air, approach the habitations of the living and inflict mortal disease upon them.

753 Every grave disease is due to a special *nahút*. Thus for instance,
776 the intermittent fever which attacks people during the cold season, is caused by a *nahút teláh*. The Mataco, however, are of opinion that it is
[755] possible for a medicine-man to cure the patient by incantations in four or five days. The worst *nahút* of all is the small-pox, *otoahtyá*, a disease which has caused terrible ravages among the Mataco at different periods. The art of the medicine-man is powerless against this dreadful demon. Therefore, when an epidemic of small-pox breaks out in a Mataco village the inhabitants know of no other remedy against the evil than to burn the whole village, to abandon the place and the sick ones, and to depart to another place. When an Indian is attacked by the small-pox, the Mataco told me, the *nahút* seizes the patient at the throat and presses it together with such violence that the tongue hangs out from the mouth, the eyes are thrust out from their orbits, the face swells up, and the patient dies.

If in a village, during a certain time, several deaths have occurred, especially if an epidemic has been raging, the Mataco are in the habit of saying: »That place has been visited by many *nahút yil*». On the other hand, if in a certain village there has been no death and no disease for a long time, the Indians say: »In this place there are, at present, no *nahút yil*». There is practically no disease and no illness which is not directly or indirectly ascribed by the Indians either to an *aittáh slamsa* or a *nahút yil*. Slight disorders and illnesses which are cured in a couple of days are ascribed to the *aittáh*, mortal diseases to the *nahút*. If a Mataco
[752] for instance breaks his leg, or if some other misfortune happens to him which does not end fatally, he is of opinion that he has been attacked by
776 a »small» *aittáh*. Similarly, there are *aittáh* operating in stupendous natural
821 phenomena, in hurricanes, in torrential rains, in thunder and lightning,

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

in the conjurations of the Toba medicine-men, as we shall presently find. C 755

These conjurations are varied with other manipulations, above all with blowing, spitting, and rubbing the bad spot. Massage regularly forms part of the treatment applied by the Chaco medicine-men, and is the only action which may really have relieving effects. — Ultimately the doctor again leans over the patient and starts to suck vigorously the bad spot. He turns away, spits and hawks up and behaves as if he were going to vomit. Thereupon he takes something from his mouth and, turning to the bystanders, shows it to them: it is the arrow, consisting of a pebble, a piece of bone, etc. which he pretends to have extracted from the patient's body. The latter should now recover; but it may be that there are several of them in his body, or that a new arrow is sent into it which he will feel on the following night. Generally therefore the treatment must be continued for several evenings.

The Choroti medicine-men also invoke their guardian spirits (*mōhsek eis*), and if they succeed in extracting the arrow, this is said to be ultimately due to the assistance of their good spirits. The invocation of the »good spirit» in connection with the treatment of sickness is however a form of worship that I have studied much better among the Mataco and the Tobas. C 755 776

The *M a t a c o* have exactly the same theory as to the nature of bodily disorders as the Choroti, ascribing curable »sickness» to possession by an *aittáh sláhsa* (a »little» *aittáh* or demon) and mortal epidemic disease to a *nahút*. The ultimate cause of sickness is witchcraft. To extract the »arrow» or splinter (*aláh*) discharged by the demon or his human controller is the ultimate aim of the medicine-man. But he cannot do it with his own powers, he needs the aid of his »good spirit», the *aittáh talák*. If the good spirit does not come down to his assistance, the patient is bound to die. The invocation of the good spirit, or the prayer, is therefore the last and decisive action of the medicine-man's treatment of the sick person. M 753 755 776

Whereas the Choroti medicine-man does not generally use any magical instrument when he treats a patient, the particular instrument of the Mataco doctor is a sort of rattle, called *tahús*, consisting of a number of pieces of tin arranged round a circular piece of leather. When the instrument is shaken it produces a dull sound which is believed to inspire the spirits with fear. At certain other conjurations it is worn by the medicine-man like a cincture round the loins.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

755 In the operations of the Mataco medicine-man, more clearly than in the operations of the Choroti curer, we can distingush two different phases: firstly, the conjuration proper, (*tilahán jāvús*) when the curer is trying to expel, by his incantations, the evil spirit from the patient's body; and secondly, the invocation of the »good spirits» (*aitláh talák*), who is besought to come down from the heavens and help the curer to extract the splinter. This act has the character of a prayer and is called *ihanék*.

Generally it is easy to decide whether a conjuration or a prayer is in question. In the conjuration the medicine-man chants in a strong and commanding voice, and shouts and exclamations, likely to inspire the evil spirit with terror, frequently form part of it. In the prayer again the doctor chants in a low and supplicating, sometimes even trembling voice, as if he were trying to awaken the compassion of his guardian spirit. In this act the rattle is never used.

In opposition to what may be said for instance of the Toba medicine-man, the conjuration of the Mataco curer is not melodious but extremely monotonous and little attractive. He chants in a harsh and low voice, coming from the depths of the chest. As usual in the conjurations of the Chaco sorcerers, there are few articulate words to be distinguished; mostly the chant consists of refrains, such as *ai*, *ai*, *hoi*, *hoi*, *hai*, *hayi*, etc., which are incessantly repeated.

As to the conjuration proper, different medicine-men chant in somewhat different ways, but the procedure is essentially the same. There are the same operations in the form of spitting, blowing, rubbing the bad spot, sucking etc., varying with verbal conjurations and shaking of the rattle. The following is an instance of a conjuration which I witnessed:

Ai, ai, ai, ai, ai, ai,
Ai, ai, ai, ai, ai, ai,
hai, hayi, hai, hayi, hai, hayi,
hayá, hayá, hayá,
hai, hayi, and so forth.

The doctor interrupts himself from time to time, and starts to blow and spit and to shake the rattle close to the part of the body which is the seat of the evil.

In another case he pronounces with much vigour, the following conjuration:

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Hämák, hämóh, hämák hämóh,
hämák, hamóya, hämák, hamóya,
hämák, hämóh, etc.

Hämák means 'malicious', evil, and *hämóh* 'go away'. The meaning of the whole conjuration thus is: »go away, evil demon!» The phrase, being incessantly repeated in conjunction with the shaking of the rattle and other operations, is supposed to have the effect of forcing the demon to leave the body.

The Mataco medicine-men however generally try to make their conjurations of the demons of sickness more effective through *dancing*. Sometimes the doctor himself interrupts his incantations and other operations and starts to dance round the patient, sometimes other Indian men or women perform a savage dance round the patient while the curer leans over him. The dance which has for its object to conjure a disease-demon is called *Nahútsak* by the Mataco. The very name (drived from *nahút*, evil spirit) indicates the purely ceremonial character of this dance. There are however different forms of the *Nahútsak*. In some cases it is a sort of ring-dance; in other cases the Mataco by this name denote a dance of the same type as the *Nahót dónnaran* of the Tobas, which will presently be described.

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To give the reader an idea of the Mataco dance *Nahútsak* in a case of sickness I may first borrow the following vivid description of a conjuration which the Italian explorer Pelleschi once witnessed in a Mataco village in the Argentine Gran Chaco. »In the midst of the tolderia», he tells us, »in a sort of open square, I saw a circle of black figures lightèd up here and there by the flames of the great fire: these were women and men sitting on their heels silently smoking. Within the circle four robust men were running backwards and forwards within a space of about eight yards. Ostrich feathers and little bells were fastened to their ankles, wrists, heads and waists . . In their hands, which were always lifted up in gesticulation, they held small gourds, half-filled with grain, and these, being shaken, added to the din. They rushed about shouting and yelling, panting and sweating; thrusting out their legs, they stamped hard upon the ground, and then raised their voices in desperation, lifting up their arms, with head bowed and body curved. By turns two of them would stop short, and squatting on the ground would shake their heads rapidly from left to right, backwards and forwards, groaning, blowing, and spitting on the back, legs, head and face of two sick persons who had been

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

755 535 placed in their midst .... The spectators remained to do honour to the treatment and increase its efficacy, but not without fear that the *ahút*, on quitting the body of the sick man might enter into theirs».[1])

This savage dance was typical of the Indian dances as far as they have the character of magical conjurations. The Indians firmly believe that they can terrify and expel the evil demon who has taken possession of the patient by violent movements and menacing gestures such as those just described. As to the ostrich feathers which the sorcerers had fastened to ankles, wrists, head and waist, some words of explanation may be added. The feather ornaments which the Indians wear in most of their dances and conjurations are not real ornaments but magical charms which eke out the powers emanating from the whole personality of the sorcerer. Like body-paintings, necklaces made of animals' teeth, rattle bells and gourds etc. they effectively help in conjuring the evil spirits.

The following is a conjuration accompanied by dancing which I myself witnessed in a Mataco village in the Bolivian Gran Chaco. Two Indian sorcerers were trying to cure a horse which was evidently badly attacked by an *aittáh* or *nahút*. The cure took place on various successive nights in an open place outside the *tolderia*. One of the sorcerers chanted in the usual way with his closed hand laid on the neck of the sick horse; the other both chanted and danced. Stamping with the feet alternately on the ground to the measure of his chant, he moved some ten steps away from the horse and then back again, repeating these movements several times. In his hand he held the rattle which he shook incessantly as an accompaniment to his dance and chanting. During the dance the man now and then took up a pebble or a small stick from the ground and threw it into the forest, spitting at the same time vigorously in the same direction. On the path where he moved he had laid some live embers. After a while the sorcerer interrupted his dance, stood close to the horse by the side of his colleague, and shaking the rattle heartily over the animal he shouted several times in a loud voice: *yame! yame! yame!*, that is to say, »go out, go out, go out!» These were the only words uttered during the whole conjuration. During his chanting the sorcerers only pronounced refrains such *hõ, hõ, hõ, a, a, a*, and so forth. The tune which the dancer again and again repeated and accompanied with his rattle was the following:

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[1]) Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 140.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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It is evident that the intention of the sorcerer was to drive away the evil demon into the forest in the direction in which he moved during the dance. With the same intention he threw the pebbles and spat in that direction. Again, the object of the embers placed on the path, as the Indians explained to me, was to burn the demon after it had been forced to leave the horse. — 755

The invocation of the »good spirit», an act called *ihanéh* by the Mataco, generally immediately follows the conjuration proper, but may also take place without a preceeding conjuration. It is an important act, since on the intervention of the good spirit the success of the whole treatment depends, but externally it does not differ much from a conjuration. At the »prayer», however, the rattle is never used. In all cases which came under my notice the chant or invocation of the good spirit was a chant without words. Evidently the medicine-man thinks that the tone of his voice alone is enough to move the compassion of the guardian spirit. 755 782

Thus, in one invocation of the good spirit which I witnessed the doctor again and again repeated the following refrains:

Am, gaum, gaum, am, gaum, gaum, am, gaum, gaum,
uh! am gaum, gaum, uh! aum, gaum, gaum, etc.

in another again he incessantly repeated:

ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho,
ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, etc., etc.

Lastly follows the usual extraction of the »arrow» or splinter, if the medicine-man has been successful in his invocation of the good spirit and the latter has come down to his assistance. Generally the doctor draws out the evil by sucking. He spits out the splinter on the ground, thereupon shows it to the bystanders, and declares that it is the thing that has caused the evil. The procedure is thus exactly the same as among the Choroti. 755

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

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763 ly refers to a custom already abandoned by the Tobas. It reminds us
766 of a similar custom of the Choroti who, as I have stated have been in the
171 habit of killing old, decrepit men with an arrow-shot in the heart to prevent them from reappearing as evil death-bringing spirits. The fact that, as Mr. Grubb relates, the Lenguas have been in the habit of burying hopelessly sick patients alive shows that such cruel customs have been wide-spread among the Chaco tribes. Its motives, as I have pointed out before, [1]) are to be sought in superstitious fear. Among all Indians the spirits of old men — especially those of medicine-men and sorcerers — are particularly feared. If such a person is allowed to die a natural death, this means that the evil spirit who caused the sickness has wholly taken possession of his soul, identified himself with it, and changed the departed Indian into an evil, destructive demon. This, according to the idea of the Indians, can be prevented by giving such a patient a violent death before he is killed by the disease-demon. [2])

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751 Lastly, I may remark that there is not in the manipulations of the
●755 medicine-man much that has the character of what we may call a »natural» cure, the only operations likely to give real relief being the massage of the sick spot and the suction, which in fact is sometimes so strong that it almost amounts to cupping. Various drugs and herbs are indeed used by the Chaco Indians for curative purposes and are not seldom alleged to have really healing effects [3]). These, however, are not exclusively used by the medicine-men; most elderly men seem to know about them. In the treatment of the professional medicine-men these remedies, curiously enough, seem to play but a subordinate part, magical conjurations being regarded as more important. — When a patient recovers in consequence of a medicine-man's »cure», as is not seldom the case, the phenomenon must first of all be ascribed to self-suggestion on the part of the patient, and the importance of this kind of »psychical treatment», in the case of primitive peoples, must not be underrated.

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[1]) See above, p. 112.

[2]) See below, p. 191.

[3]) Most »natural» remedies of the Chaco Indians are used for outward application, and they generally consist of decoctions made from certain leaves and roots. There is not much hygiene to be traced in the therapeutics of these Indians, nor do I believe that their remedies have much healing effect.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7.

Choroti SK6

The *ear-tubes* which are worn as ornaments for instance by the Choroti, Ashluslay and Toba-Pilagá and which consist of wooden plugs or pieces of cane, sometimes of tremendous size, are likewise nothing but magical charms or amulets. This was clearly indicated by the Choroti, who told me that the ear-discs are worn to prevent the evil spirits, the *möhsek*, from penetrating into the ears. Their hugeness and peculiarity is evidently thought to act as a deterrent upon the spirits, and there seems to be the idea that the larger they are the more efficacious.

The Indians of the Pilcomayo use various kinds of *necklaces*, and it seems to be the rule that among the most primitive tribes, such as the Choroti and Ashluslay, they are more worn by men than by women, among the more civilized Tobas again more by women than by men. Speaking of the dress of the Choroti, I mentioned the large and costly kind of necklace consisting of snail's shells elaborately fashioned into small round buttons with a hole drilled in the centre and closely strung together. The necklace, called *lähslehuésle* in the Choroti language, is not only an ornament but at the same time a magical charm. The Choroti no doubt gave me the true explanation of their original significance when they told me that the necklace is a protection against sickness. The evil spirits, according to the idea of these Indians, preferably attach themselves to the throat or the chest, because catarrhs are very common in the Chaco during the dry season. The spirits are believed to enter into the body through the throat or the breast, but this is prevented by the protecting necklace. Hence, when a Choroti Indian sells his necklace or leaves off wearing it, his comrades say that he will most certainly soon fall ill. The same idea I found prevailing among the Mataco-Nocténes of Bolivia, where such ornaments are worn by both sexes. Thus the son of a chief, who was just at the age of puberty, one day appeared painted red in the face with *urucú*, and with a large necklace which covered the neck and the breast. When I asked the father why his son had put on these things, he answered: »It is in order that he may not fall ill«. Both among the Mataco and the Choroti it is customary that children of both sexes go totally naked up to the age of eight to ten years, but nearly always they wear collars and facial paintings which most certainly are not »ornaments« in the civilized sense of the word.

Among the South American Indians in general it is a common custom to tie round a limb, for instance the wrist or the leg, a leather strap or some other kind of band, professedly with a view to making the arm or the leg strong. The Chaco Indians also commonly wear such ligatures

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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and they are not even meant to be decorations. Among the Choroti it was no rare thing to see old men and women — especially when they were suffering from some pulmonary catarrh or cough, or from rheumatism — wearing a cord or strap bound tightly round the chest. The idea appeared to be that the demon who had entered into the chest and caused the evil should be forced to leave the body or at least prevented from penetrating further. On one occasion I met an old woman whose right forearm had been paralyzed, probably through a fit of apoplexy. She had a dirty woollen band tied round the arm at the wrist, and when I wanted to remove the useless thing, she would not allow it, declaring that it was »good». I soon learnt that the arm had been seized by an evil *möhsek*, and realised that the band was »good» as a sort of charm against the demon. Just as civilized people may, in a case of snake-bite, apply a ligature or cord round the bitten limb above the wound so as to prevent the poison from spreading, so the Indians consider such ligatures as preventive of evil spirits. Among the Choroti the band is not put on with any ceremonies, but probably the material itself is supposed to have some mysterious power. However this may be, in these cords or bands tied round the breast or the arms, we have, I think, the most simple specimens of bracelets, girdles, and other magical ornaments of the same type used by the Indians.

In addition to the magical ornaments here touched upon the Chaco Indians use various kinds of amulets and charms consisting of the tusks or claws of the jaguar or other wild animals, in feathers of birds, mussel shells etc., but I shall not dwell upon this side of the practical religion of the Indians. What I have still to pay particular attention to are their funeral rites and ceremonies.

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

XIII. The Diseases

753 The diseases are demons which have the appearence of
776 men but are invisible. They wear feathers like medicine-
men. Smallpox for instance is especially ugly. His head
● 755 is swollen and full of small holes. He lives not for from
Salta, in a cave on a big mountain. The demons of disease
live under the ground or within the *yuchanes*. They leave
their shelter to enter men and make them sick. In order
to get them out of the bodies of sick people one must ask
them what they want, for the demons always want some-
thing. One has to say, »What do you want?» The demon
answers, »Food, dresses, a gun.» All these things are to be
given him. But they are equally satisfied with only the
sight of these things and men may very well eat the food or
make use of the things whose essence the demons have
received. It would be very dangerous to eat of a dish before
the demon has helped himself. Men dance in order to scare
a demon or chase him away. The demon is obliged to parti-
cipate in the dancing and gets tired. When those who take
part in a treatment have danced for a while, the magician
speaks to the disease. The disease asks whether they are
angry with him. The medicine-man answers, »No, we are
dancing as usual.» The disease then says, »Then let us not
dance any longer, for I am to dance to-morrow too.»

753 Each thing has its *husék* (spirit) or image and it is this
774 image which the disease requires after he has stolen or
entered the soul of the man and it is this soul which the
medicine-man has gone to get. During the first part of all
medical ceremonies, the medicine-man's spirit goes to the
disease and asks him which things he wants in return for
the sick man's soul.

[124] One of the reasons why the Matako always require payment
to let themselves be photographed is that by photographing
them one takes their image (spirit) and thus may hurt them.
The money they get for the photograph may eventually

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serve to pay the medicine-man in case something happens to them. 753 774

The ceremonial objects whose spirit the disease takes away do not become any weaker, since they may be used directly afterwards.

Even though the disease has been given food, he remains insatiable and wants more. He also wants to take away the things he is offered, that is the reason why the medicine-man is obliged to blow on the objects lest the disease should stick to them. When the disease does not get what he wants, he becomes angry and kills his victim.

The disease, or a bad spirit, introduces into the body of the sick person small sticks, usually objects which will make him feel pain. The medicine-man has to take them away by sucking the aching parts and he blows the patient to get the sicknes out of his body. Before treating a patient a medicine-man adorns himself with feathers in order to look like disease or the demon who caused it. The diseases and the spirits are very fond of these ornaments and enjoy seeing them on those who cure the patient. 753 755

When the malady is not very serious, the patient is treated within his hut for economical reasons. To determine whether or not the patient is to be decorated depends upon the seriousness of his case. The medicine-man and the patient get under the same blanket and the former speaks to the disease. Thus the audience is not too large and the disease is easier to cope with. Sometimes it is satisfied with a quart of alcohol. A sick child is always cured inside the house, except when there is an organized ceremony through which they can profit toward the end. 755

According to the Indians vaccine exerts a powerful action against the disease and he can no longer attack the individuals thus vaccinated. Shots fired at the end of the ceremony puts the disease to flight and prevents him from desiring the gun with which one assistant danced. To keep away sickness it is good to hang the carapace of a *tatu* 751

careta (big armadillo) or the skin of an alligator in the house. The disease will think that the animals are there and will not go into the house.

a) *The Treatment of Disease*

I attended a ceremony for the treatment of disease. The ceremony took place in front of some huts, the space was closed in by awnings and cloth. Inside the enclosure were the patient, the medicine-man and a certain number of individuals who assisted the latter. The patient, an old man, was sitting in the center of the space, his body carefully covered with cloth. The medicine-man stood near him and while murmuring incantations blew on the patient's body through his half clenched hand, beginning with his back, then the shoulders, the face and so on. In the meantime four or five men were dancing without interruption and made all the noise they could with a belt of big bells. They had tied to their feet anklets of deer hoofs and wore around their waists belts of ostrich feathers and on their heads were diadems. One of them held in his hand a bunch of ostrich feathers.

Their dance consisted of a cadenced and half-jumping walk with slightly bent knees. Some dancers went forward or backward while others stayed in the same spot. During the ceremony the medicine-man received the help of another old man who was also squatting at the patient's side. He began muttering incantations and blowing on the sick man as hard as he could. After one hour of this utterly exhausting exercise, the medicine-man went to a pot full of rice which was carefully concealed by a sheet near the patient. He crouched under the sheet and recited in a supplicative voice a long incantation over the food. Afterwards he blew on the rice with all his strength. He then offered goodly portions of it to all who had taken part in the ceremony. Then the medicine-man went to two *caraguatá* bags full of dresses. He covered them with a cloth under which he crouched. He

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pronounced the same incantation, blew on the dresses which were unfolded and taken away. On the heap of dresses had been placed a gun wrapped in a red belt richly inlaid with shells. One of the dancers seized the gun and slinging it over his shoulder executed a dance bearing a certain likeness to the one he had done before. The dancers were relatives of the sick man, probably his sons.

b) *Treatment of Disease*

A rich woman who was seriously ill was cured by five renowned medicine men. A big open space of about fifteen feet square was cleared not far from her house. Wooden posts were erected and a sort of tent set up. One of the posts, about 20 feet high, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentine flag. Around the tent were placed the objects required by the disease, those which are supposed to please him, a mosquito net, a weaving loom, an old suitcase, pieces of gaudily colored cloth, a saddle, a soldier's coat, a lamp, a lance or a gun. A little further away fires were burning where the disease's food was being prepared and a pail of water was being heated for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent on a pile of hay and old rags. She had put on her best dress and was covered with ritual ornaments. The five shamans, who were old men, were equally adorned with feather belts, rattles, tropical helmets and other precious objects. The lower part of their faces was painted black.

There were also some twenty dancers wearing feathers, red belts adorned with shells, rattles, caps, red pieces of cloth, whistles and old broken watches, while perhaps ten old women ran about holding rags in their hands and one even held an umbrella. Everybody, including the sick person, danced and sang, at times the medicine-men and the sick woman stopped, they blew on her and the dancing was resumed. After a while the chief medicine-man whistled on

his bone flute and the dance stopped abruptly. The sick woman danced alone, lifting slowly one foot and then the other two or three inches above the ground, without moving from one spot. In the meantime two medicine-men shook their rattles. A man clapped his hands laughing, and others shook their rattle gourds. It lasted for about ten minutes, then the medicine-men joined the dance, but for a short time only. After a pause, two of them approached the sick woman and started undressing her. In the meantime another medicine-man was shaking his rattle all along her body, beginning with the head. All the ornaments were slowly removed, the assistants struck the ground at the place where these ornaments fell, and then picked them up and ran to throw them away. They shook them several times, then put them carefully in order. The sick woman sat up in the middle of her tent and was given a drink. The ceremony was interrupted, then resumed again. The entire ceremony lasted from the 20th to the 24th of March, every day from 8 to 11 o'clock and in the evening from 8 to 10 o'clock. Shots were fired every day in order to drive away the disease.

On the 26th of March another woman, who manifested the same symptoms as the first, was cured in the following way: The place already described was used, but the flag was removed and replaced with a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers and on top of the staff there was tied a large bunch of ostrich feathers. The staff itself was decorated with ritual belts, woolen belts trimmed with snail shell beads. On the cross-bars, which separated the tent from the village, offerings of the same type as for the preceding ceremony were placed. During the cure, the sick woman remained sitting the whole time on a pile of hay in the center of the tent, surrounded by four medicine-men and about ten dancers, and further away were six or seven women. All were adorned with ritual belts and bells and all were dancing and singing. A passage had been opened between the cross-bars which was meant as an exit for the disease. If someone

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stood in the entrance he did not prevent the disease from escaping but he did expose himself to contracting it. 755 535

At a signal from the chief medicine-men, the dancing was interrupted. Two men seized a white and red striped poncho by its extremities and began to dance, making side jumps legs parted. They went to the sick person and put the poncho on her, then they ran with it to the exit and shook it there. They repeated this several times, then they wrapped the woman from head to foot with the poncho and a medicine-man started rubbing her through the cloth, while everybody sang without dancing. After a while the twisted poncho was removed, taken to the exit and thrown away. Then the dance began again. An assistant sprinkled water on the ground and the chief medicine-man stopped the dance once more. He set down near the sick woman, covering himself entirely with a large black blanket and started speaking to the disease. In the meantine, the man who was moistening the ground brought a pail of water and with the assistance of one of the medicine-men he washed the face, head and body of the patient, then she was placed with her feet toward the exit. During the course of the dance, the assistant moistened the shoulders of the male dancers, while an old [302] man painted the women's faces, making two red dots on their cheeks and a stripe along the nose. During this dance a medicine-man blew on the sick woman and another covered her face with a piece of red cloth. After a while the woman lay down and the dance went on, the paricipants assuming threatening expressions, then suddenly all looked very satisfied. The ceremony was interrupted, then after an hour's time it was resumed.

On the following day another woman was taken sick — but not such a rich one — and another treatment of a more modest character was undertaken. In front of the woman's house a tent was stretched and she was placed in the tent. The offerings consisted only of some pieces of cloth and a few bags. When I arrived the chief medicine-man was speak- 755

755 ing to the disease while an old woman, who was a magician, sang and blew on the patient. The others were talking among themselves without paying any attention to what was happening. After a pause, during which everybody drank some of the wine required by the disease, a singing man started to run around the patient, his body bent forward and his arms dangling. The chief medicine-man spoke once more with disease while the medicine-woman continued blowing on the patient and another medicine-man placed around the head of the patient front pages of illustrated papers and popular novels. The man who was running stopped and the chief medicine-man started talking with the others. Everybody sat down and drank some water, then two women began to walk rapidly around the others while they sang. One of them stopped and after a short while the other [535] one stopped too. Then all who were present started dancing. The dance was interrupted only by the coughing of the patient who seemed to be growing weaker and weaker. She actually died during the ceremony. Immediately after her [764] death the dance stopped. The old women ran about singing and shaking their rattles. Two men laid the dead woman on her right side and folded her legs and arms. They wrapped her in the pieces of cloth on which she had been lying and she was taken to her home. The medicine-men undressed quietly while the women of the family uttered lamentations.

c) *General Expulsion of Disease*

755 292 The ceremony for general expulsion of disease took place early in the morning in the open air, far from all houses. It was performed by all the medicine-men of the village standing in a row. All were holding in their hands a rattle-gourd [534] and a bone whistle. Some were provided with strips of cloth to which were attached rattles; the strips were worn across the chest or hung at the elbow. Others wore ceremonial shirts, some wore shirts made of *caraguatá* fiber and one

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wore a red knitted shirt of wool decorated with shells. Many wore on their foreheads frontlets trimmed with feathers. Another ceremonial accessory worn by most of them consisted of a bunch ostrich or *potsax* feathers. Two especially famous medicine-men had their faces painted black and red and on the hat of one of them were ostrich feathers. Naturally among the performers were a number of women, some of whom had their cheeks painted red. In front of the performer's row some spears had been stuck into the ground with the points downward. A spear with the point upward was also stuck in the ground at the same distance away as the others. During the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was fixed to the spear with the head pointed up. When I arrived I noticed in front of the row a young man who was not a magician. He was grinding into a calabash the *hatax* seeds from which the medicine-men later took pinches.

The ceremony consisted of a song without words, identical to that sung by the medicine-men when curing diseases. The singing was punctuated by the rattling of the gourds and from time to time by the clacking of hoof and rattle necklaces and the whistling of the flutes. Each blowing of the whistle indicated a new phase in the traditional sequence of events associated with the ceremony (new metamorphosis of the spirit of the medicine-man, its arrival or departure from a given place). The rattle-gourd is sometimes brandished in a theatening manner as though to scare away an invisible being. In turn, without interrupting the ceremony, some of the performers took a snuff of *hatax* powder. Those who had bunches of feathers stretched them forward making the same gesture which has already been described when speaking of the rattles. One of the performers was running in front and behind his colleagues, holding a bunch of feathers in his hand and dusting them off from head to foot. He was assisted by another who was holding bells and rattles which he shook behind his companions. After they had taken a snuff of *hatax* the performers went on singing, shak-

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755 533 ing the rattles and performing threatening gestures. Some of the medicine-men sang the song of their own spirits ignoring the chants of their colleagues.

755 These preliminaries were succeeded by a direct attack against the disease. Some individuals stepped out from the row and with violent gestures each brandished his bunch of feathers or the rattle-gourds then returned to their places in line. A man began kicking the earth and was immediately imitated by others who took up handfuls of dust which they threw in front of themselves. The whole troop followed this example and they rushed against the disease. Some concentrated all their strength on a special spot as though they had driven the Disease there, hitting the spot repeatedly with their sabers or bunches of feathers, then stamping on the ground as though they had buried their victim. The attack against the invisible enemy lasted for a long time, much enthusiasm being shown. Others brandished bunches of feathers which they had tied to the points of their spears.

The second part of the ceremony corresponds to what we might call a general desinfection. The medicine-men first wiped one another off, then let their gourds rattle quite close to their colleagues, then blew on each other's heads and necks as though for illness. Then everyone, both men and women, who had attended the ceremony were called. They all sat down and the medicine-men and-women went to them, wiped their bodies with bunches of feathers, blew on their heads and let the rattles tinkle all along their bodies. These rites were performed with the same care on children as on adults. Our friend Sanchez was given special attention. Aften having been blown on by the *cacique* and chief medicine-man, assisted by four magicians, two of whom blew on him and sang, the others shook their rattles, bells and gourds. The medicine-men who had remained in the same place turned around and repeated all the gestures they had performed before. Once more some of them stepped out of the file to cut grass under which they frantically buried the

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disease. The sounds of the whistles followed each other at closer intervals and the rattles were shaken with still more energy and persistance. The ceremony was finished when all the members of the community were relieved of the bad influence which had entered them. The expelled disease was the aphtous fever from which the cattle were suffering at that time and which seriously affected the health of many individuals, who had eaten contaminated meat and become ill.

The medicine-men had changed their spirits into *istins* (sort of ravens) to call on the disease. As the disease was particularly severe at this time the first attempt at conciliation did not meet with much success. The men had to change into *masa* (earth bees). When the disease is being expelled, it is chased into the ground.

XIV. Treatment of People Possessed by Ho?nat-Lele

Upon visiting a Matako settlement (near Las Lomitas, Formosa) one night I had the opportunity to be present at the curing of two cases of demoniac possession. In the first case the patient was a girl of 13 or 14 and in the other a child. The girl had gone to the bush and had been caught by a *nǫoLe* or a *ho?nat-Lele* who lives in thickets under the earth. It was not a *welán* who entered the body of the girl as the *welán* live in the *yuchan* only and the girl had not walked near one of these trees. The *ho?nat-Lele* made its presence known through the girl's hysterical fits. She cried and sobbed as though she were in pain. The Indians told me something was hurting her, although she did not suffer from any disease. They laid particular stress upon this fact. When I arrived the girl was surrounded by an old man who acted as medicine-man, her father, two aunts and another man, whose relationship with the patient I was unable to determine. Each had put on a red poncho with white stripes. The possessed girl and all those with her were standing, with the exception of the medicine-man, who was squatting near the patient's legs.

They were as close to the patient as possible and were muttering a low and monotonous chant, marking the rhythm with movements of their bodies. The medicine-man sang in a loud voice and shook rhythmically at regular intervals a belt from which hung hoofs and metal rattles. He brought his instrument quite close to the possessed woman then pulled it back against himself. At a certain moment he pressed the girl's legs with his arms and let the bells tinkle behind her. The poncho was suddenly taken away and the possessed girl burst into tears. I could then observe that she was richly attired and dressed in red. On her head were several broad red belts to which were sewn shell discs. Around her neck and across her breast she wore some collars made of shells and white glass beads in a meshlike pattern.

The medicine-man got up, with the assistance of the spectators, and blew with all his strength on the body of the possessed woman. Instead of becoming quiet she sobbed harder than ever and threw herself into the arms of one of her aunts. Each time she behaved in this manner the medicine-man blew and shook his rattle. As she seemed to be about to fall into a swoon they let her sit down carefully and at her side her relatives sat speaking kindly to her as though to console or quiet her. Then the girl, her aunts and the medicine-man were covered with the same red poncho, the end of which one of the spectators kept in his hand moving it up and down. The medicine-man sang his vociferous chant and shook his bells against his patient once more.

When the poncho was removed I noticed that the woman seemed calmed. She was leaning her head against the shoulder of one of her aunts and nobody spoke. After a while she started to complain again. The medicine-man immediately shook his bells and his assistants consoled her in low voices. One of the women took away all her ornaments, folded them carefully and put them into a bag. Those present remained sitting for some time without uttering a word. The silence was broken only by the medicine-man blowing

on the sick woman. Then, as she seemed to have quited down, they started smoking and talking together. The possessed woman even accepted a cigarette. 755

Observations made by natives during the performance: The adornments are worn by the patient on behalf of the spirit who is fond of the colors. The songs and the noise of the bells are also intended to please the spirit who, charmed by the ornaments and the noise, gets quieter and leaves the patient. 755 776

During this treatment another group of about eight Indians were participating in a similar ceremony. They were dancing around a kind of improvised altar which consisted of a stick surrounded by four smaller ones forming a cross. The central stick was topped by palm leaves, the ends of which were wrapped in paper strips painted red. The four other sticks bore palm leaves painted red with the ends cut off. These sticks were inserted into wooden stands painted alternately red and black and connected in pairs by transverse rods. The whole structure was resting on some rags. A rolled poncho belonging to the medicine-man had been laid near the central stick. The ground for the ceremony had been carefully swept. According to my informant the central stick contained the injurious element which had caused the disease. That stick was supposed to be loaded with bad influences and I was warned not to touch it. 755 778

The dancers wore different costumes. Two of them had belts of ostrich feathers, and feather wreaths on their heads. In addition they wore bells and rattles on their breasts, around their loins and their ankles. Around their necks they wore necklaces of sea shells and in one hand they held a bunch of ostrich feathers. The other dancers wore their ordinary clothes with the exception of their headbands and the bells and feathers they wore on their ankles. 755 535 301

When I arrived they were dancing in a circle around the altar, from right to left, looking straight ahead. Their dance step might be defined as a jerky jog-trot. They accompanied 755 535

They accompanied
755 themselves with a very deep song, a sort of *heh, heh*, repeated
535 rhythmically but on different notes. When the dancers
[533] got tired they left the file without ceasing to sing, and after they had rested for a while they resumed their places.

The second part consisted of dancing couples. The dancers faced each other in twos, and holding each other by the arm made side jumps, holding their legs parallel but slightly apart. Always moving from right to left they went several times round the altar, from time to time spinning themselves about. When they stopped to catch their breath one of them uttered a loud cry and started to dance alone, that is to say, making side jumps with parted and stiff legs, always facing the altar, although he whirled now and then. After spinning around twice he was joined by the others. They stopped dancing, sat down and one of them took off his ornaments. Another dancer covered himself entirely with a poncho and uttered his ë ë ë, always in the same tone. The medicine-man went to get the poncho he had left near the altar, he put it on the child and started to sing and to blow on the little patient. The dancer who had covered himself with the poncho kept silent, but remained under his cover. When the ceremony was over he began to sing.

a) *Treatment of a Man Possessed by a Spirit*

755 A man was caught by a spirit at about 9 P. M. He was decorated with red belts and placed in the center of the ceremonial ground. He was given two bells and in front of him were stuck three sticks, one of which about 2 yards long was totally covered with a rather dark cloth, the other two between 2½ and 3 feet high had rags and bunches of ostrich feathers fastened to their tops. The two medicine-men, wearing only belts of ostrich feathers and holding in their hands metal rattles, were standing by the side of the patient. A little further away were two assistants (probably

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relatives of the patient) and three dancers. All wore rattles. 755

The medicine-men sang and blew on the patient, who shook the bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in one place and let their rattles jingle. The dancers then started to run from left to right and thus made a complete circle. For the second turn, when they arrived at the height of the sticks, they reversed and ran around in the opposite direction, then reversed again and so on. While the assistants were stamping their feet, singing and shaking their rattles, the medicine-men went on singing and blowing. The patient had not moved during the dance. After they had run around ten times, the dancers went to rest, smoke and talk with the assistants, but the medicine-men still blew and shook their rattles. The patient was still motionless. After a quarter of an hour the dance was resumed, this time to the accompaniment of the patient's bells and rattles which all present were shaking. All seemed to be rather happy. The ceremony was then over and they sat down to smoke. The sticks were removed and the ornaments taken off, first those of the medicine-men, then the assistants and dancers, and finally those of the patient. The patient returned quietly to his hut. 755 535

XV. Sexual Life

Before marriage nothing prevents young people from having a free sexual life. The girls paint their faces red if they have had sexual intercourse the preceding night. 836 302

In love affairs before marriage it is always the women who take the initiative. 836

If a man has sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman his loins and head will ache. As for the woman, she is in no danger. 833 841

You must not sleep with a woman whose child has not yet cut any teeth for the woman will lose her mind and as the child cannot eat alone he will die. 834 828

/211/

755 [114] In the course of the mission to the Argentinian Chaco of which I was in charge during 1932-1933, I had the opportunity of being present at a certain number of ceremonies for the expulsion of illnesses, or evil spirits.

[753] [774] The Matako /Mataco/ Indians do not seem to be acquainted with any other medicine than magical medicine; that is normal since the illness takes the image of the sick person and not his body.

Among the ceremonies described below, a distinction can be made between those from which the whole village benefits and those from which only a single sick person benefits.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illnesses for All the Village

(April 8, 1933).

755 This ceremony took place in the morning in the open air 756 rather far from the houses, and was carried out by all the medi- 783 cine men /the English term is used/ of the village. They were 796 arranged in a row facing east, and all had a maraca and a bone [534] whistle in their hands. Some of them were carrying bands of rattles, either in the hand, slung over the shoulder, or hooked [292] over the elbows. Some officiants were dressed in red wool ceremonial shirts spangled with rings of shells, and others in war [237] shirts made of caraguata thread. Almost all were wearing red headbands decorated with feathers or hats adorned with ostrich feathers, and most had a bunch of ostrich feathers in the hand. [302] The faces of the principal medicine men were daubed with red and black, and those of the women with red. Facing the row of officiants were planted several arrows, points down, and a lance with the point up. In the course of the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the lance. When I arrived at the spot, I noticed a young /212/ man crushing ha'tax seeds in a gourd which the medicine men would take later.

/212 cont./

755 The ceremony consisted of a song without words, identical
756 to the one the medicine men make heard during the treatment
783 of illnesses. The singing was given rhythm by the rattling of
796 the maracas, and, from time to time, by the sound of the bands of rattles and hoofs and blasts of the whistles. Each whistle blast marks a new stage in the performances connected with the ceremony (new metamorphosis of the spirit of the medicine man, as well as his arrival or departure from a given place). The maraca was sometimes held in a threatening manner as if to repulse an invisible being; the same gesture was made by those who held ostrich feathers. In turn, without interrupting the ceremony, one or another of the officiants took the ha'tax powder. One of the officiants ran behind and in front of his colleagues, dusting them from head to toe with a feather in his hand; he was assisted by another man, who made the rattles and little bells on their backs jingle. After having taken some ha'tax the officiants began to sing again, to brandish their maracas, and to make threatening gestures with them or with the feathers. Some medicine men were singing the song appropriate for their spirits, without concerning themselves with the recitative chants of their confreres.

The direct offensive against the illness followed these preliminaries: some individuals stopped out of the row, brandishing their maracas and feathers violently, and then returned to their places. Another began to throw up some dirt with his foot and was immediately followed by another who, seizing handfuls of dust, threw it in front of himself. Then one of them unsheathed his liana-cutter and began to cut the grass around him; his example was followed by almost the entire group, which threw itself into the assault on the illness. Some obstinately set upon one spot, as if they had at last driven the enemy into a corner, and beat it with redoubled blows of their liana-cutters or feather brooms, and then stamped on it as though they were burying their victim. The attack on the illness lasted rather long and was executed with great seriousness.

/212 cont./

755 756 783 796 The follow-up to the ceremony was what we could call a general disinfection. The medicine men began by dusting each other off, making their rattles jingle right against the bodies of their colleagues, and blowing on the tops of their heads or the napes of their necks, as is done for illness. Then all the men, women, and children who had attended the ceremony as spectators were summoned. They sat down and the medicine men and medicine women /given in English/ came to pass their feather brooms over their bodies, to blow on their heads, and to make the rattles jingle along their bodies. These rites were carried out just as scrupulously for the children as for the adults.

/213/ My friend Sanchez was the object of particular pains; after the chief medicine man in person had blown over him, he was assisted by four medicine men, two of whom blew and sang over him, while the other two shook rattles, bells, and maracas.

Those of the medicine men who were not occupied with the disinfecting turned halfway around and repeated all the gestures which they had previously carried out. From time to time one or another again left the row to mow down the grass and furiously engulf the illness. The whistles succeeded each another at intervals which were ever closer together, and the rattles were shaken with more energy and insistence.

The ceremony was over when all the members of the community were considered relieved of the evil influences with which they had been impregnated.

Notes

[164] [231] 1. The illness to be expelled was hoof-and-mouth disease, with which the livestock was then stricken, and which had had unfortunate consequences on the health of the people. Several who had eaten contaminated meat had fallen ill.

/213 cont./

755 2. The medicine men had transformed their "image" (spirit) into isti'n, a bird of prey, in order to go find the illness, but as on this occasion the latter had proved particularly malicious, this first attempt at conciliation had failed, and the men had to transform themselves into mɨsa', earth bees.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(January 24, 1933)

755 In a small neighboring village a man was caught by naLi'le. Toward midnight he was dressed in red and white and [292] seated in the center of the place for ceremonies; he was given two bells. Facing the sick man three sticks were stuck in the ground; one of them about two meters long was entirely covered with a dark cloth; the other two were 75 to 85 cm. long and had pieces of cloth attached to their upper part, which was topped with tufts of ostrich feathers. The two medicine men, dressed only in belts of ostrich feathers and holding iron rattles in their hands, were at the sick man's side. A little farther away were two assistants (probably members of the sick man's family) and three dancers; all were holding rattles.

[533] The medicine men sang and blew on the sick man, who shook his bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in [535] place, /214/ making their rattles sound. The dancers next began to run around the group in the following manner: they went from left to right while turning their backs to the sticks; arriving level with the latter for the second time, they changed direction and continued in this fashion, alternately making two circles in each direction, while the assistants beat time with their feet and sang, making their rattles jingle, and the medicine men continued to sing and blow. The sick man had remained motionless during this time. After about ten circlings, the dancers

/214 cont./

755 went to rest, smoking and talking with the assistants, but the medicine men did not stop singing and shaking their rattles, the sick man continuing to remain motionless. The dancing was [533] resumed after a quarter of an hour, accompanied this time by the [535] rattles and singing of all the officiants and by the sick person's bells. The participants had a fairly joyful air. The ceremony ended everyone sat down and began to smoke. Then they carried away the sticks and began to take off the ornaments, first those of the medicine men, then those of the assistants and dancers, and lastly those of the sick man, who went quietly to his hut.

Note

[774] naLi'le is a spirit who lives underground and steals the [776] images of men. Sometimes those whom it has taken thus become medicine men.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

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554

(March 20-24, 1933)

A woman who was seriously ill and very rich was treated by five great medicine men of the region.

[349] In the area around the house where she lived, about five square meters of ground were cleared, wooden posts were erected there, and a kind of tent was erected; one of the posts, of about six meters, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentinian flag. Around the tent were placed the objects demanded by the illness or appropriate to please it: a spread-out mosquito net, a poncho on a weaving loom, an old suitcase, some cloths of loud colors, a saddle, a military coat,

/214 cont./

755 554 a storm lamp, a lance, and a gun. A little farther away fires were prepared for cooking foods destined for the illness and a bucket of water for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent on a bale of hay and some old cloths, dressed in her best clothes and covered with ritual ornaments. [292] [301] [302] The five medicine men were also adorned; they were wearing feather belts, rattles, colonial helmets, /215/ and other precious objects; the entire lower part of their faces was daubed with black. There were also about 20 dancers, dressed up in 755 554 feathers, red belts decorated with shells, rattles, caps, red cloths, whistles, and old broken watches; about 10 old women 535 were running around with pieces of cloth in their hands, and one of them with an umbrella. Everyone, including the sick woman, danced and sang; sometimes the medicine men and the sick woman stopped, and the medicine men blew on her; then the dance was resumed. After some time the chief medicine man blew on his bone flute and the dance stopped outright. The sick woman danced by herself, slowly lifting one foot, then the other, three or four centimeters above the ground, and staying in one place; during this time, two medicine men were shaking their rattles, a man was tapping in his hands, laughing, and another was shaking two flat, tin bottles — in which powder is sold in the interior of Argentina — filled with seeds; this lasted about ten minutes, and then the medicine 755 554 men joined in the dance, but only for a short time. After a stop two of them approached the sick woman and began to take off her things; during this time a medicine man was shaking his rattles along the woman's body, beginning with the head. Slowly all the ornaments were taken off, the assistants tapped the ground on the spot where they had fallen, then, running, they went to throw them outside; having gathered them together they shook them several times, and then carefully arranged them. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent and given something to drink. The ceremony was interrupted and then continued.

/215 cont./

755 The whole ceremony lasted from March 20 to March 24,
554 every day from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 8 to 10 P.M.
Each day at the end of the ceremony a shot was fired to frighten the illness.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(March 26, 1933)

755 On March 26 another woman who had the same symptoms of illness as the preceding one was treated in the following manner: the site already described was used, but the flag was replaced by a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers, and a thick tuft of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the post. The staff was decorated with ritual belts. Offerings of the same type as those for the preceding ceremony were placed on the crossbars which separated the tent from the village.

755 During the entire ceremony the sick woman remained seated
535 /216/ on a bale of hay in the center of the tent; right next to her were four of the great medicine men, a little farther away about ten young dancers, and then a final circle of six or seven women. All the officiants, adorned as usual with feathers, ritual belts, and little bells, danced and sang. A passage was
[123] contrived in the separating crossbars, and, as I insisted on it, a medicine man came to tell me that this opening was intended to let the illness out; I asked him if my presence would prevent it from going out; he told me no, but that I was running the risk that it would enter me at the moment it left the body of the sick woman.

The dance was halted at a sign from the chief medicine man, and two men, taking a poncho, striped red and white, by its ends, began to dance, jumping sideways, legs open; then

/216 cont./

755 they approached the sick woman and passed the poncho over her
535 head; next they ran to the exit and shook it. They repeated this maneuver several times, then completely enveloped the woman in the poncho, and a medicine man began to rub her through the cloth. Everyone was singing but some were not dancing. After some time the poncho was taken off, carried at a running pace to the exit, and thrown outside. The dance was resumed; an assistant threw some water on the ground, and the chief medicine man then stopped the dance again. He sat next to the sick woman, covering himself completely with a large black blanket, and began to speak with the illness; during this time the man who was watering the ground carried up a bucket of water and, with the help of a medicine man, washed the face, head, and body of the sick woman, who was turned with her feet toward the passage made in the crossbars, and a path was traced with water from her feet to the passage. The chief medicine man got up and the dance was resumed with renewed
302 ardor. During this dance the assistant moistened the shoulders of the male dancers, while an old man painted the faces of the women red, giving them two circles on the cheek bones and a streak along the nose. At the same time one medicine man blew on the sick woman and another covered her face with a red cloth. At the end of a certain time the sick woman lay down, the dance continued, taking on a threatening character, and then suddenly the people appeared satisfied, having undoubtedly obtained a momentary success. The ceremony stopped and was resumed after an hour.

Note

64 According to the medicine men with whom I had a chance
32 to talk about these two sick women, they were suffering from "sickness in the chest," /217/ easily explicable by a sharp atmospheric drop of almost 25° in 24 hours.

/217 cont./

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(April 2, 1933)

755 [55] A woman being sick, she was taken care of, but as she was less rich, the ceremony had a more modest character. Opposite the sick woman's house they put up a tent under which she lay down. The offerings were only some cloths and string bags. At my arrival the medicine man was in the act of speaking with the illness, while an old woman, also a medicine woman, was singing and blowing on the sick woman. The others were talking among themselves, without appearing to be very concerned with what was going on. After an interruption, during which [213] everyone drank the wine demanded by the illness, a man began to run around the sick woman, singing, his body bent forward and his arms dangling. The chief medicine man continued to speak with the illness, while the woman blew on the sick woman and another medicine man put a certain number of covers from illustrated newspapers and 20-centavo popular novels around her head. The runner stopped and the chief medicine man began to talk with the others. Everyone sat down, drinking water, and two women began to walk rapidly around the others, singing. One of them stopped, and a little later the other did 755 the same. Then all the assistants began to dance, accompanied 763 by hiccups from the sick woman, who appeared to be getting worse and worse; in fact she died in the middle of the ceremony.

Immediately after the death the dance was stopped; the old women ran around the tent, shaking maracas and singing, while two men laid the dead woman on her right side, bending her legs and crossing (or bending) her arms over her breast. She was wrapped in the cloths on which she had been lying and [152] carried to her house. The medicine men stripped themselves [756] quietly while all the women of the village wailed the customary lamentations.

/217 cont./

Notes

753 1. This woman, who was about seven months pregnant,
755 continued to carry enormous loads of dry wood, which provoked
843 the illness to which she succumbed.

761 2. According to the opinion of the village, the death was due to the fact that she had become pregnant before her first child knew how to feed itself.

Plate VIII

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A. The medicine men sing to the rhythm of the maracas.

B. Threats by the medicine men; a whistle announcing a transformation.

[End Plate 1]

Plate IX

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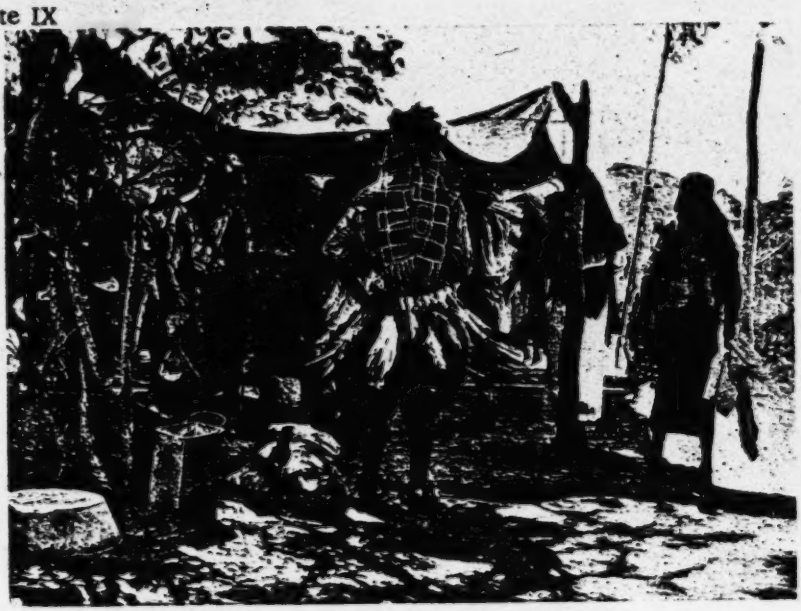

[415]

A. Dance around a sick woman.

B. Dance around a sick woman.

[End Plate 2]